

Students write about how violence has affected their lives. They suggest ways for ending this scourge upon the quality of life in many of America's inner cities. They express their resolve to do what they can to make a difference by having nothing to do with this phenomenon that, left unchecked, will continue to rob their community and country of a promising component of its future leaders.

Sound schmaltsy? Not to the survivors of thousands of those gunned down in the prime of their life, like those in California, Colorado, Georgia, and elsewhere. Not to those who had previously despaired of having a reason to believe that they could make it through school without their or someone dear to them being killed or falling victim to bodily harm en route.

Not to the unsung heroes and heroines among teachers who struggle daily and valiantly, often against seemingly insurmountable odds, to try to instill a sense of self-worth, values, and the pursuit of excellence among America's leaders of tomorrow.

Not to school guidance counselors, leaders of youth associations, crime prevention and law enforcement officers, and civic as well as business, professional, and religious leaders committed to offering youth a range of opportunities for self-development no matter how disadvantaged their personal, home, and community situations might be.

Not to former Kuwaiti Ambassadors to the United States Shaikh Saud Nasser Al-Sabah and Dr. Muhammad Salim Al-Sabah. Not to KAF Chairman Dr. Hassan Al-Ebraheem, KAF Vice-Chairman Anwar Nouri, and not to KAF co-founding board members Fawzi Al-Sultan and Daniel Callister. Not to Kuwait University President Dr. Faizah Al-Kharafi, Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science Director General Dr. Ali Al-Shamlan, and the Kuwaiti members of KAF's board of directors.

Not to Administration and Congressional leaders who endorse President Bush's encouragement and empowerment of private sector initiatives that seek to reverse the emasculating effects of school and urban violence on our country's would-be future leaders.

Practical Idealism. What KAF has done is help bring into being in an important corner of American national life the essence of practical idealism. It has done so through joining hands with the National Campaign to Stop Violence, the National Guard, the regional and local offices of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Council of Great City Schools, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the U.S. Department of Education, the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations, and the U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee. Each of these organizations supports KAF's Do The Write Thing Program.

KAF's programs and activities also receive support from nearly a dozen Kuwaiti companies and leading American multinational corporations. In addition to the Marriott Corporation, the list of U.S. firms that support KAF's Do The Write Thing Program is impressive and growing. They include U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee members Boeing Corporation, Booz Allen Hamilton, Bryan Cave, Ltd., Chevron Corporation, CMS Energy, ExxonMobil, General Dynamics, General Electric Corporation, Lockheed Martin, Lucent Technologies, McDonnell Douglas, Merrill Lynch, MPRI, Northrop Grumman, Parsons Corporation, Philip Morris Companies, Inc., Raytheon, SAIC, Texaco, and TRW.

KAF Student, Teacher, and Parent Award Ceremonies. Anyone search for an injection of idealism would do well to attend one of the DTWT awards ceremonies. Present at

each is an assemblage of national dignitaries and, in the wings, a significant number of journalists, television producers, and film crews.

The opportunity to observe the press in such a setting is illuminative of the powerful impact that this program has on young and old alike. In few other settings are media professionals so predictably moved to tears as they are by the impact that the Do The Write Thing Program has on American youth, their teachers, and their parents.

Each year during the filming of the annual awards ceremony, this writer has seen cameramen involuntarily reach for their handkerchiefs. They become caught up in their emotions from seeing, at the end of their lens, a mirror image of someone who could easily be their daughter or son.

This is what invariably happens when one sees and hears the students read their prize-winning essays to appreciative adult audiences in the Rotunda of the U.S. Capitol and elsewhere.

The stirring and uplifting scene happened again ten days ago in Kuwait instead of Washington. An added feature to the ceremonies commemorating the anniversary of the country's liberation was a recent KAF-commissioned film about the DTWT Program. The film premiered at the Kuwait-based Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, the Arab world's leading intra-regional development assistance agency. The audience was virtually a "Who's Who" of all the national and international leaders that had been involved in lifting the veil of violence from Kuwait ten years ago.

The film's main actors were an unlikely collection of celebrities: former President Bush, former Secretary of State James Baker, former Secretary of Defense and now Vice-President Dick Cheney, current Secretary of State Powell, and General Norman Schwarzkopf. Each testified to the efficacy of the Do The Write Thing Program as a major contribution to the national challenge of ending the continuing pattern of violence in the lives of America's inner city students and children.

A Symphony and Two American Teenagers. One of the many highlights of the several days' festivities in which this writer was a participant was a specially-produced symphony by a Kuwaiti artist that included strands of "America the Beautiful." The symphony was performed by an ensemble of Kuwaiti musicians.

At the end of the concert, young Rominna Vellaseenor, a 13-year-old student from an inner city school in Chicago, took the stage to read her essay. One could barely see her head behind the podium as she hurled thunderbolts of insight about the phenomenon of violence in America. She was followed by John Bonham, now in university but earlier a student and resident of a crime-plagued neighborhood in Washington, D.C.

Rominna, one of this past year's Do The Write Thing Program winners, was there with her mother. John was a prize-winner several years ago. Rominna's essay was cast in the immediacy of the here-and-now of a life that has been seldom far from crime in her school and community. John's was forged from the perspective of the rear view mirror, contrasting the downwardly spiraling life he had led before he participated in the program and the one hundred and eighty degree turn-around for the better that it has taken since then. Following their speeches and the film, there was not a dry eye in the audience, the President's included.

KAF's Further Preparation of America's Leaders of Tomorrow. Only days before the anniversary celebrations began, a group of American university and high school students had visited Kuwait as participants in

the National Council on U.S.-Arab Relations' Kuwait Studies Program. What all had in common was their outstanding participation as delegates to one of the National Council's annual Model Arab League Leadership Development Programs, which are currently underway and involve 2,000 students and their teachers in Models in 18 cities across the United States.

For years now, KAF, the University of Kuwait, the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Science, and the American Embassy in Kuwait, headed by former Ambassadors Edward Gnehm and Ryan Crocker, and by current Ambassador James Larocco, have hosted the Kuwait Studies Program for promising American youth that have performed with distinction in the Model Arab Leagues.

Considering that all of the participants to date are still in their twenties, the results, to date, are phenomenal. One of the program's alumni is currently assigned to a major U.S. government post that deals daily with pressing issues pertaining to the Kuwait-U.S. bilateral relationship. Another entered the Foreign Service and was posted to the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait. Another is a career military officer working full time on strategic U.S. defense planning relating to Kuwait and other GCC countries.

Yet another alumnus of the program is currently a Rhodes Scholar. Others include the winner of First Prize for Best Master's Thesis on the Middle East at Oxford University last year, a former intern at the National Council and KAF who is finishing her Ph.D. at Stanford, and one of the best of a new breed of American foreign affairs specialists who is currently teaching tomorrow's military leaders and defense strategists at one of America's service academies.

More than half a dozen of the Kuwait Studies Program and Model Arab League alumni have returned to Kuwait for a year of intensive Arabic language training at Kuwait University. Others are working in the United States for member companies of the U.S.-GCC Corporate Cooperation Committee that have invested in Kuwait's economy. Each of these young American leaders of tomorrow has been exposed at length to a side of Kuwait culture and society quite different from any they could have imagined short of visiting the country and meeting with its people.

KAF As A Bridge To The Future. In this way, KAF is helping to prepare a cadre of Americans that will manage the future bilateral Kuwait-United States relationship and America's ties to other Arab countries, the Middle East, and the Islamic world.

This group of American youth that KAF has assisted is only a few years older than those mowed down by gunfire in the California school. Each acknowledges their debt to KAF and recognizes it as an organization that helped them, much earlier than most of their peers, to take responsibility for their actions and to do what they can to make a positive and lasting difference in the lives of others.

For any nation in search of a cure for the phenomenon of violence and other behavioral excesses that plague its society, it is incumbent upon its leaders to look first and foremost to their country's own resources for solutions. This, to be sure, has been and will continue to be done by America's national, state, and local leaders. But here is a sterling example of how one can also learn much that is timely and relevant from the private sector and civic activist efforts of a dedicated group of Kuwaitis.

These Arab allies, though geographically remote, are no less profoundly concerned than Americans are with funding the means to come to grips with the vicious cycle of violence cycle of violence visited upon their